

Only this MORE *X^o* (3)
Sad and Lamentable

NEWS From

BRISTOL,

In a Sober

LETTER

FROM A

GENTLEMAN of that **CITY**

TO HIS

FRIEND

IN

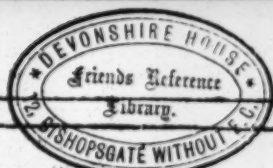
LONDON.

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Printed for John Madam in winter

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Bristol the 19th of April, 1682.

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Cry of Oppression and Cruelty in Bristol, to be true in matter of Fact, and what I can credible Information stand to and confirm, : Meetings of all the Dissenters continue to ormerly: The *Quakers* forcibly kept out of

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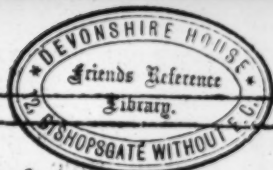
But they are narrowly Watch'd in both,

and Hunted after by the Informers and Spies employ'd on purpose, who are so Eager at their work, that they Disturb and Rout both as soon as ever they have any notice of them.

For the discovery of the private Meetings in the City, these Church- Drivers are so Yeer, that if they hear a Prayer, Singing of Psalms, have a Suspition, or any sham Information of a Meeting in a Dissenters House, away they Hurry, Break open his Door, or enter his House through their Neighbours, run up and down all the Rooms, to the Affrightment of the Women and Children. And all this without producing a Warrant, or bringing any Badge of their Office. In these Boisterous Practices (I assure you) they have been found, when no such thing as a Conventicle was or could be found. By this judge the Distraction these poor people are in: What adds to it, is, that being disturbed of their publick Meetings, they cannot have that small favour the Conventicle Act allows them, that is, of Meeting in their private Families: For at Sessions Hundreds are Prosecuted upon statutes made against *Papists*, and at the *Bishops-Courts*: The Lay Officers rebusic Tooth and Nail to load them with

THE
OFFICE OF THE
SHERIFF OF THE COUNTY OF
MIDDLESEX
IN THE MATTER OF
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JAMES W. WATSON
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Bristol the 19th of April, 1682.

S I R,

Yours of the 15th Instant I received, observing its Contents to advise that *Bristol* is become the great Scene of News, many persons being desirous to hear frequently from hence; I shall for your Satisfaction give an Impartial Account of the late Occurrences amongst us. In the first place I have to acquaint you, that I formerly received a little Book you sent me, called, *The Sad and Lamentable Cry of Oppression and Cruelty in Bristol*, which on its reading over, I find to be true in matter of Fact, and what I can from my own Observation and Credible Information stand to and confirm, since that Book came abroad. The Meetings of all the Dissenters continue to be disturbed with equal vigour as formerly: The *Quakers* forcibly kept out of their Meeting-house, hold their Meetings constantly in the Court before it, (a custom (you know) proper to those people, whom nothing but a Goal debar them of Meeting together. (At these Street-Meetings they are not very Numerous, and them for the most part Women, there being above Fourscore of their men at this time *actually* in Prison, and several others of that Party out on Security to appear at Sessions. The other Dissenters meet sometimes privately in their several Houses, and sometimes publicly in the Fields, and out-parts of the City: But they are narrowly Watch'd in both, and Hunted after by the Informers and Spies employ'd on purpose, who are so Eager at their work, that they Disturb and Rout both as soon as ever they have any notice of them.

For the discovery of the private Meetings in the City, these Church-Drivers are so Yeer, that if they hear a Prayer, Singing of Psalms, have a Suspicion, or any sham Information of a Meeting in a Dissenters House, away they Hurry, Break open his Door, or enter his House through their Neighbours, run up and down all the Rooms, to the Affrightment of the Women and Children. And all this without producing a Warrant, or bringing any Badge of their Office. In these Boisterous Practices (I assure you) they have been found, when no such thing as a Conventicle was or could be found. By this judge the Distraction these poor people are in: What adds to it, is, that being disturbed of their publick Meetings, they cannot have that small favour the Conventicle Act allows them, that is, of Meeting in their private Families: For at Sessions Hundreds are Prosecuted upon Statutes made against *Papists*, and at the *Bishops-Courts*: The Lay Officers are busy Tooth and Nail to load them with

that so, having deliver'd them to the Devil, they might prepare them for the Goaler, which is the portion of several already. The Rigour and Severity of these Proceedings makes several Industrious and Wealthy-Dissenters quit their Callings, and remove their Families to a more quiet Station, by which means many of the Poor are like to want Bread. The City generally to decay in its Trade, and the Kings Interest considerably too lessen'd in its Revenue; the Proof of which will be fully made out by casting up the Custom-house Books at the years end, to which I refer you.

The noise of Breaking open Houses, and carrying away Goods, is at present abated, little Distresses having been made of late, which I Impute, 1st. To their being sensible of the Error, and Unlawfulness of most of their former. And next to their want of Subject to make a Conventicle of; for there being at this Instant no other publick Meeting but that of the *Quakers*. The Informers are so forward to break up that, that they generally disperse them at their first coming together, or before they come to that Exercise of Religion, as to know, whether it differs from the Liturgy of the Church. Their Preachers, whether of the City or Strangers, are presently caught up and carried to Prison; so they (which you know is Customary) sit Silent, whereby the Informers lose the opportunity of the Benefit of a Conventicle; however, rather than want work, they strive to make a Riot of this Silent Meeting. The manner of it is thus, When the Informers come to disturb them, one of the Gang without producing any Authority, makes Proclamation [peremptorily] in the Kings Name, for all persons to depart; which if not presently complied with, then to their work they fall, that is, to Hale, Push, and drive away the Women and Children: For the men they take oft times two or three of the chief, commit and lead them to Prison, where commonly they are detained one Night, or so, on this Authority, and then the next day conven'd before a Magistrate, and sent to *Newgate* with a *Mittimus* for breach of the Peace. Now, I mention *Newgate*, I cannot let it pass without saying somewhat of the Doleful Condition of those *Quakers* that are now Prisoners, whose Case indeed would force Commiseration from any one, that's either Conscientious or Christian: For in the first place the Goal, is in its self so Noisome, that it hath been Presented by several Grand-Juries, and next so strait that these poor People have scarce Room to stand or lye one by another. In one Room there is Nine Beds; and in another small Gallery under the Roof of the House, Six Beds; and in another Room 14 Foot Square, Seven Beds. There are Beds also placed in several little obscure Holes, not fit for any to Lodge in: But whats worst of all, these places afford them not Lodging enough, but some are forc'd to Lye in Hammacks, some on the Floor, and some on the Table Board of the Hall, which is the common thorow Fair of the Goal. By this unreasonable Crowding them in a Nasty Goal, several of the Prisoners are grown Sickly, and some put forth of the Prison Sick; many are the Consternations of the Sober and Judicious people of this City

to think what the Tendency of these things will be; for besides the decay of Trade aforementioned, and want of Employment for the Poor, &c. The Lives and Health of these the Kings Protestant Subjects, and others of this Populous City, are thereby greatly endangered.

You know, *Sir*, Application hath been made both Here and Above for a Redress; and what little success it hath hitherto produced: For the *Quakers* had by their Friends no sooner obtained an Order of Council for the Enlargement of the Goal; in which I must do our Magistrates that Right, as to contest they were ready to obey it, and had by their Report manifested not only the Truth of the *Quakers* Complaint, but their own willingness to ease them: But *Mr. Knight* one of the Sheriffs (the Dissenters grand Prosecutor and Informer) being then in *London*, wrote peremptorily to the Goaler not to obey it: And also, as he intimated in that Letter, procured an Order to Reverse that Order of Enlargement; on which Foot the Prisoners continue. The several Prints at that time will tell you, that this Sheriff had also the Honour of Knighthood conferred upon him; so in my following Relation I shall observe him with that distinction.

Since the Return of this new Knighted Sheriff (the Pageantry of whose coming in, you have fully in *Thompson's* Intelligence, set out to his way of Advantage) the Prosecution of the Dissenters have been with a Severity no way short of the former, towards the *Quakers* it exceeds, thus, that is, this New *Sir John* (for by the way we have an Old *Sir John Knight* in this City, that is a worthy Magistrate, and truly Loyal Church-man) is more Bluff than formerly, Cracks highly of his Power and his Orders, and not satisfied with barely Committing the *Quakers* to Prison, and their Stowing them in Heaps, but he must break their Meeting in Prison too, which I presume is no more Warranted by Law, than many other of his Actions are.

Since the Prison being thus made their House, I cannot find any Clause in the Conventicle Act that prohibits their Meeting together, and four more with them. However our New *Sir John* is not willing it shall be so, but comes to the Prison to disturb them; with him, he brings, the last of *March*, his Elder Brother Informer *Mr. Helliar*, and another young Informer of the same Name: The second of *April* he brings his Companion or Secretary *Brand*, who is one that triumphs loudly in his Masters Honour, and Reports that he was called at *Newmarket* one of the Pillars of *Bristol*: These coming to Prison Meeting the days aforesaid, made there a grievous ruggle. Our New *Sir John* and Old *Helliar* Menacing the Prisoners with Irons, Dungeon and the Gallows. *Sir John* tried to scare them by Threatning to draw out his Doughty Sword, and Hales, Pulls, and Throwson the ground several of the Prisoners there met; Old *Helliar* thrust his Cane at the Faces of several of the Prisoners; and the Sheriff took one man by the Shoulders, Haling him with all his strength to the Stairs-head, and then forcibly threw him down Stairs backwards, which fall had in all likelihood broke his Neck: His Limbs, had not some on the Stairs Providentially saved him: His

Cruelty stopt not here, but he commands the poor man into the West-houle, the common Receptacle for Fellons between Sentence and Execution, and there continues him to this day : The Prisoners asking him why they were so Severely used, he Answers them with a Huff, and Talks Big of his Power and Orders. This Unnatural, and Unprecedented Severity occasions great Disatisfaction to all Worthy Persons, who are concerned to see His Majesties Goal made so near to relemble an Inquisition, and the Sheriff to Act the place of a Lord Inquisitor.

Last Sunday this Sheriff, that is, our New Sir *John* came to the *Quakers* Meeting, and with him his usual Associates and Fellow Informers, *Mr. Helliar, Oliff, Lugg, Casse, Tilley and Patrick, Brand and Summers.* The first six being a Sett of Constables pact together as the only persons of the City for such work : These disturbed the Meeting, Haling out, pushing and driving away the *Quakers*, many of whom, both men and women, they, as is usual, took Authority to Commit to *Bridwell*, where Eleven of them were continued all Night, sitting up by the Fire for want of Lodging.

Please to Note, That the taking upon them this Authority is so common with them, that in their Discourses and Actions, they all alike Imp the place of Justices of the Peace ; the meanest Tool among these Informers menaces with his power, Commits with more Imperiousness, and Releases with more freedom, than is common for any of our Aldermen, who still, to give them their due, sent the Women home as soon as they were brought before them. The Mayor calling to our New Sir *John*, and asking, *What they did, and for what they were Committed?* he Answered, *That they were all at a Meeting, said nothing ;* so he knew not what they were about, unless they were plotting to break open the Prison, and get away their Husbands.

To satisfy you with my distinction, and calling some of these Informers mean, I assure you, it is their proper Title, they being here fully known so, and in all their other qualifications, that the naming them to an honest *Bristol* Man, presently furnishes you with their right Character. *Mr. Helliar* hath precedency as a person of an Estate, one noted for——— and famous for his experience and great cunning in these practices, but our New Sir *John* carries the Bell, for he is certainly the Son of once a truly worthy and Loyal Magistrate, who bred him a Merchant, and placed him a Factor at *Mevis* : Since I write only News from *Bristol*, I shall say nothing of the ruggle he drove there, but come to his Character here, where for his Loyalty I refer you to the *Observer* and *Thompson's* Intelligence, and have this further to add to it, that is, He now abounds in an Estate of at least seven score pound a year, he hath part of two Ships, and a stock in Trade, besides the Improvement he's daily making in his present new Calling. Yesterday the *Quakers* Meeting were again disturbed by our New Sir *John* and his man ; The Constables came not with him, they by a Compacted agreement having placed

lers, a Drummer, with a Drum, also a Flagg and Arms; for this Company Victuals and Liquor were provided to carry on the designed Revel and Riot; just as the Sheriff came, the doors of the Meeting-house were threw open, and the Fiddlers began to play on their Fiddles. The Sheriff smiling ask'd, *What was the meaning of this?* Tilley one of his Brother Informers answered, *They meant to be merry, and came there to Dance.* To make good his word, they attempted to take hold of several young Women to hale them in, who fearful of being abused by so vile a Company, held fast by the Antient Women; upon which two of the said Girls with the Women, who sheltered them were by the Sheriff committed to *Bridewell*, and with them two more for reproving their Lewdness. The manner of the Quaker Womans reproof was thus, *Well Sheriff Knight, said she, I see that though we cannot be suffered to serve God, these shall to serve the Devil; our peaceable Meetings you seek to make Riots, and here you your selves are Rioting and Revelling to a great excess.* Oh! these doings are a shame to *Bristol*, which was once reputed a sober and well Governed City: Now it's altered for the Prophane, Drunkards, Revellers and Whore-masters are Countenanced, but those that fear God made a prey of; surely God will visit heavily with his judgments for these crying sins.

Toproceed, The Meeting being thus dispersed, these Constables, Informers and Company still continued in the Meeting-house, Eating, Drinking and making a clamorous noise; visited they were by some of the same Complexion, whose Names I may furnish you with another time. In the Interim I have to tell you, that having well drunken in the Lower-room, they then went up Stairs to the Tenement of a late Widdow, and there at the top of the House they sung, made *Huzza's*, and Revelled till about three in the Afternoon, when being weary, they left their place; and to shew their power, *Tilley* he goes to *Bridewell*, and releases the six Women. Just before this Revel broke up there happened a very pleasant passage, that is, the Informers being got to the Upper Tenement of the Quakers Meeting house, had then the view of the House of a Quaker, against whom these Blades have an Inveterate spleen, in that he was one that went to *White-Hall* to complain of their Illegal proceedings, this they manifest by inquiring every Meeting day after him, and menacing how they would manage him for his Petitioning, supposing they were now levelling their thoughts at him, their heads swimming with the height of their Station and strength of their Liquor, they dreamed or fancied a Conventicle at his house, so away they came, and better it on this suspicion, he being then with his Wife and Mother abroad at Dinner at a Relations House, and having left in his House three small Children and his own Servants only, knocking at the door, the Servants were fearful to open it to so rude and boisterous a Company, so one of them, that is, *E. Summers* a Rascally Pockifed Butcher, goes over a Neighbours Wall and enters his Garden, then went and opened the Street door, letting in the other Informers, that is *Tilley*.

out doors, whether fearing their Entry was unwarrantable, or that they waited for a suppoſed prey, I know not; but whiſt they were without doors, *Talley* enters and walks about the firſt Floor within doors; *Summers*, *Patrick* and *Cuſſe* runs haſtily up Stairs to the very Terret of the Houſe, Ranſacks every Room and Cloſet above, ſearcht the Cellars, Waſh-houſe, and Out-houſes below Stairs; and finding none in the Houſe but Children and Servants, away they departed. When I laſt ſpoke with the Gentleman, he told me, *He hopes he loſt nothing*, however ſhould I be ſo ſerved and be at home, I think I ſhould be loth to let the Gentlemen go without Examining their Pockets; knowing that both Law and Goſpel would from their thus entering a Houſe, make them all great Treſpaſſers and ſhrewdly ſuſpected of being Thieves and Robbers.

I have now given you a large account of paſſages here, which you may freely Communicate to all your Friends, and give them aſſurance of the certainty and truth in all particulars, I doubt not but ſeveral Letters this Poſt makes mention of this latter part of it, and that the Quakers themſelves will take care to Print this as remarkable. I would give you leave to Print my Letter alſo, but that I expect the Lying *Obſervator*, or ſome ſuch *Mercenary Pamphleteer* will in their next Dialogue call it a Libel againſt the Law; and with a few down-right ſtaring Lies, confute it all; as the *Obſervator* did the little Book aforementioned; you know 'tis common for them to term the giving an Informer his true Character, and publiſhing their noble Acts the Arraignment of the Government, whereas no Magiſtrate is any way concerned.

I ſhall now draw my long Letter to a Concluſion, which indeed hath ſwelled in its bulk much above my former intention, albeit the Subject is ſo Copious as 'twould fill a Volumn.

Next Week our Selliſion begin, the Conſideration of the procedure of which makes us big with expectation, the Indiſtments of Recuſancy againſt Scores of Proteſtant Diſſenters are like to come to an Iſſue; as alſo the Tryal of the Quakers Meetings, as to making them Riots, I will not be ſo injurious to my Country-men as to conclude afore-hand, that ſuch Proſecutors will have ſuch Juries, having great Confidence in the integrity and care of the Mayor and Juſtices, to ſee that the Juries be worthy and prudent men, of which this City (to ſpeak without boaſting) can afford good plenty. Our Sheriff *Lane* I underſtand is alſo ſolicitous in this point, who, to give him his due, is a quiet and worthy Gentleman; but I am informed our new Knighted Sheriff ſticles ſomewhat againſt this, which the Diſſenters not without cauſe grumble at, he being their great Proſecuter and Informer, they think he ought to be paſſive. The Quakers murmur heavily at it, and ſays, *It juſtifies their Complaint above, that they can have no relief below*. When our Selliſion is over, you may expect a ſhort and true account of its procedure at the ſame time. I beg your excuſe in tiring your patience in ſo long a